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DEPARTMENT OF NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

INFORMATION DIVISION

TELS.: 9-2-3139
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For release 9:30 a.m.
Tuesday, November 20, 1962

COMPLIMENTS OF
Walter Dinsdale,
London - Souris Constituency



Welcoming Remarks

by the

Honourable Walter Dinsdale

Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources

to the

Organization Meeting

For A Federal-Provincial Parks Conference

Ottawa

November 21-22, 1962

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For Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, November 28, 1962

Working Remarks

by the

Honorable William D. Johnston

Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources

to the

For A Federal-Provincial Parks Conference
Organization Meeting

Given

November 21-22, 1962

Gentlemen:

On this significant occasion I am happy to greet the deputy ministers and officials of the federal and provincial government departments concerned with the administration of parks and wilderness recreation facilities.

Origin of the Meeting

Your meeting today had its origin in the "Resources for Tomorrow" Conference. Indeed it might be regarded as observing the first anniversary of this important Conservation Conference. That conference was called together because of the growing concern for the wise management and multiple use of our renewable resources. As the Canadian frontier receded into history, thoughtful Canadians, encouraged by the challenge of Prime Minister Diefenbaker in 1958, came together to consider the future. In a day and age saturated by short sighted materialistic satisfactions, the Conference was an epochal event.

During the year that has passed since the holding of the "Resources for Tomorrow" Conference, some progress has been made towards implementing a few of the multiplicity of ideas to which it gave birth. We now have a Canadian Wildlife Federation, a voluntary group concerned with conservation in the wildlife sector. The Resource Ministers' Council is a functioning inter-governmental group. At our last meeting, the decision was reached to establish a secretariate independent of both the federal and provincial governments (yet responsible to both) to serve as a clearing house for resource management projects. In a sense the secretariat will serve the very useful function of co-ordinating between the federal and provincial levels of government. I am sure you gentlemen will agree that here is a function of the utmost importance in our federal state. The provinces own the resources. Yet they must be managed in such a way as to serve the best interests of Canada as a nation. As a minister of National Resources, owning no resources except those that the provinces are willing to turn over to me, I am fully aware of the problem.

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For our purposes today the "Resources for Tomorrow" Conference was particularly important in its explicit recognition of recreation as an important land use. In the words of the Proceedings of the conference, "recreation is legitimately a concern of all those who make decisions about renewable resources". Actually this language is too mild. We have been passing through a major social revolution in this century. The affluent society, a by product of the industrial revolution, has provided leisure time for all. We have higher incomes and a higher standard of living to raise our wants and needs to unprecedented heights. The demand for recreational outlets has become almost insatiable. With the universal mobility caused by the modern automobile and system of paved highways, all these developments have placed heavy pressures on our parks, and now we are faced with an expansion of the tourist industry which can only be described as an explosion in tourist population.

Problems raised at the Conference

Basically the recreation workshops at the conference recognized that there are many questions which inhibit the adequate and effective development of the recreation potential of this country. Indeed, I think those of you who were at the Conference came to the conclusion that we had all the questions and none of the answers. It was realized that answers must be found and found soon. Hence the reason for calling this meeting.

It may be helpful in setting the context of this meeting if I simply recite some of these problems here. The first is research - we need to know much more, both about the needs and wants of our people, and about the extent and quality of the resource base suitable for various types of recreation development. We need to work on standards - the establishment of criteria for the selection of areas for parks and other recreation uses, and the standards for the optimum development of the areas which we select.

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Other problems include matters of administration and co-ordination which in turn raise questions of jurisdiction - within and between governments, and between the public and private sectors. We also need to know more about effective parks information and education programs, about training personnel, and about co-ordinating the efforts of those primarily concerned with recreation facilities with those others who are skilled in the development of recreation programs.

While we already have a wide variety of attractive and well-managed parks in Canada, we all recognize many improvements that can be made, and are being made. I think that it is fair to suggest that between them the provincial, federal, municipal and regional parks systems provide pretty good service to the people of Canada. However, the various parts of the overall picture have been filled in a rather haphazard and unco-ordinated way over the years. Our fundamental problem now is to know how to adapt our policies to meet new pressures and new opportunities.

National Parks - Development and Policy

The backbone of the present parks system in most parts of Canada is the National Parks system. In our National Parks we are reaping the benefits of a series of land acquisitions which go back to 1885, when Banff was set aside for park purposes. In western Canada at least, most of the land now included in the National Parks system was set aside some decades before the pressure on resources for recreation became acute. It is the custom to extol the wisdom and foresight of our Fathers of Confederation. Certainly the setting aside of areas of outstanding natural beauty for the enjoyment of all generations required idealism and wisdom of the highest order. There are some in contemporary times who still do not agree with the Founding Fathers in this respect even though our generation has all the advantages of hindsight.

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The general shape of the National Parks system is accordingly well established, although there are some gaps that we would like sometime to complete. We have not, for instance, any outstanding representative examples of prairie country, of the pre-Cambrian Shield, of the Pacific and Great Lakes coast lines, or of the far north.

With this qualification, our main problem in most regions is to make the best use, in present and future conditions, of the park areas set aside over the years. Since the war, which accelerated the process of social change already well established, the calls on the services which the parks provide have vastly increased in number, and substantially changed in kind. I am sure that our experience is duplicated in your provincial systems as well.

Back in 1911, the parks catered to about 100,000 visitors a year. Most of them came by train, lived in hotels, and represented the upper income groups who alone had the time and money to travel. The total grew quite slowly to 150,000 in 1920, half a million in 1930, and about a million at the beginning of the war. It is apparent that we did not feel the full impact of mobility offered by the automobile until the post-war period.

After the war, the explosion began. From 1,800,000 in 1951, the total of visitors to the National Parks and National Historic Parks jumped to 6 1/2 million this year. In 1962, we have marked up a 30 per cent increase over 1961.

From the figures on provincial parks attendance that I have seen, I am sure that our experience will come as no surprise to you. In Ontario, for example, I understand that Mr. MacDougall estimates about seven million visitors this year - more than three times the total registered just five years ago.

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In the National Parks at least, the kind of services which are in demand have also changed. We no longer cater primarily to the well-to-do. The impact of the automobile is reflected in the construction and improvement of park roads, to open new areas for visitors and to provide for scenic motor tours. The Trans-Canada Highway has made two parks - Glacier and Mount Revelstoke - conveniently accessible to visitors for the first time. At Glacier we faced the startling increase in the number of visitors from 400 in 1961 to some 400,000 in 1962.

We also share the experience recorded by the provinces of vastly increased interest in camping. One survey that crossed my desk a few days ago showed that half the visitors to Waterton Lakes National Park preferred campsites to other forms of accommodation. Camping facilities have been doubled and re-doubled over the years in an attempt to meet the growing demand, but at present we see no indication of a change in the trend and substantial further developments are accordingly planned. In this manner, we are providing the opportunity for an enriching outdoor holiday to the so-called average Canadian.

I am sure that all of you know from recent experience of the kind of problems which result from these new developments in the use of parks. In planning a campground, for example, the critical problem is not to calculate how many tents it is physically possible to pitch on a given acreage, but rather to establish how many tents can be occupied for how long without destroying the amenities which attracted the visitors in the first place. Having established this, we are then faced with the problem of providing other, sufficiently enticing facilities for those extra visitors who represent the overcrowding. Similar examples could be drawn from many aspects of park management.

A separate and difficult type of problem arises in trying to reflect the diverse needs and wants of park visitors. How can one fit

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the twenty-sixth place, the...

the twenty-seventh place, the...

the twenty-eighth place, the...

the twenty-ninth place, the...

together hotels, motels, restaurants, picnic grounds, campsites, sports grounds and solitude into a coherent and attractive complex of services? In short, and to take the two extremes, how can one meet the wishes both of the visitor who wants everything done for him, and the other visitor who wants to do everything for himself? The highway or restaurant that suits the first may, simply by being there, spoil the lake for the second.

In the early days, when parks were large and visitors were small in number, these problems seemed less important. There was plenty of room for both points of view. For the future, however, I suggest that with the steady growth of visitors, the problems will be critical. It was in response to this situation that the Parks Planning Section was established in 1958 and that new policies governing park zoning and related matters have been introduced.

Purpose of the National Parks

The National Parks were established and remain primarily as conservation areas and sanctuaries. Their use for recreation is accordingly qualified by this underlying requirement. Under the Act it is not possible - and it would not in any case be appropriate - to offer elaborate artificial facilities for highly organized and sophisticated forms of recreation. The parks can however - and I suggest that they must - provide relief from the tensions of our cities and the man-made ravages of so much of our countryside. They offer, in short, recreation in the sense of re-creation.

It is, I think, significant that this aspect of park use is recognized and valued by the great majority of park visitors. For example, the Waterton Lakes Survey to which I referred earlier shows a clear preference for passive activities - rest and relaxation, nature observation, motoring, and picnicking. It is not until the fifth and sixth places on the list are reached that active recreations - hiking and swimming - show up. Perhaps it is significant that even these require little in the way of specialized facilities which are not fully consistent with the basic parks purpose.

and the following:

It is clear from the same survey - and others prepared earlier - that the public recognizes and accepts this basic purpose. The survey asked visitors to rate the more important purposes of National Parks in order of preference. The replies show very clearly that most people regard the preservation of forest and wildlife, and the provision of opportunities to appreciate nature, as of equal and major importance. The other two choices offered - facilities for physical recreation and promotion of tourism - were accorded relatively minor significance.

In summary, there is no question that visitors to the National Parks look upon them as sanctuaries where they may go to escape the "big," blooming, buzzing confusion" of the twentieth century.

Need for Other Parks

Because of their numbers, their location, and their established purposes, the National Parks are limited in meeting the total demand for outdoor recreation in Canada that exists today. The federal government is accordingly concerned to see other facilities developed under appropriate auspices to provide a balanced and adequate service for the people of Canada and their visitors from other countries. This is why we have been talking about the need for recreational parks at every possible occasion. We must supplement our present park system with a program of recreational park development, a program that meets the recreational needs in our rapidly expanding urban communities and in every province.

In the provincial and regional sphere, I can speak, of course, only from second hand knowledge. It is, however, my impression that most of the provinces did not benefit quite so substantially from the very early reservation of outstanding areas for park purposes. As a result, a number of provinces have recently put in hand programs to greatly increase their park holdings in response to immediate and growing public demand. Especially in more densely settled areas, the possibility of combining

recreation lands with water conservation and flood control offers possibilities for developing invaluable facilities at a cost within reach. Such major multiple resource use programs are underway in Ontario. The provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba have major projects underway at the moment too in co-operation with the Federal Government. It should be pointed out too that the A.R.D.A. program provides excellent opportunities for developing recreational areas under the alternate uses for land section. The Camp Ground on Picnic Site Program and the municipal Winter Works program have been useful too, judging by the enthusiastic support of the provinces.

Co-operation between Federal and Provincial Authorities

Though our written constitution says nothing about recreation, the very long tradition established in Canada recognizes that both federal and provincial governments have a role to play. Few people now would question this conclusion. However, the border lines between appropriate federal and provincial activities have never been defined and, in practice, they seem to have been established at different points depending on local conditions in various parts of the country. No one could call the system logical but, in a peculiarly Canadian way, it does seem to work. Perhaps it worked better in the past when people did not travel as often, as far, or in such numbers as they do now. In present conditions, it seems to me that it is very important that we explore and exploit the opportunities for co-ordination that are appropriately open to us.

I think it is important to recognize that all of us in this room are jointly concerned to provide a service to the people of Canada. Elements in this service may be federal, provincial, regional, or municipal; the distinctions are important to us, but I do not think that they mean very much to the park visitor who is surely far more concerned with the fishing, or with the nature trails, than he is with the particular government which is responsible for the facilities he enjoys. In other words - and I use this

only as an illustration - if Algoquin Park in Ontario were federal and Riding Mountain Park in Manitoba were provincial, I doubt very much if the people of Toronto and Winnipeg would notice the difference.

In this sense it is possible to regard our federal, provincial, and regional parks as one system. I do not, of course, suggest that they be organized as one system; this would be impossible on several grounds and undesirable on many more. There is I think a great deal to be said for the diversity of approach which results from separate responsibility, in parks as in so many other fields of Canadian activity. However, since we jointly provide a national service, there is surely room for a measure of co-ordination in planning and management, in order to improve the service. Co-ordination is a rather frightening word but, in this context, it seems to me to imply no more than being aware of what other governments are doing or considering and using this knowledge to the extent that it is relevant and helpful. There is obviously more scope for co-ordination in fields like research, and education and information, than there is in fields like land acquisition which must reflect more closely the particular problems of the jurisdiction involved.

But effective co-ordination needs an organizational structure - indeed it may be desirable to have more than one. Speakers at the "Resources for Tomorrow" Conference suggested regular official federal-provincial consultations; they also spoke about an association of parks executives, and about some form of Canadian parks association which would be an essentially non-official body. I suppose that one might draw a parallel with the wildlife field where we have federal-provincial wildlife meetings; we also have the professional association of wildlife biologists, and the newly formed Canadian Wildlife Federation.

Whether all these types of organization are needed in the parks field, I do not know; it is perhaps significant that, except for this meeting, there is at present no national organization at all.

Request for Recommendations

It rests with this meeting to consider its own agenda, and I have no wish to trespass on your prerogative in this regard. I do hope, however, that among other matters you may reach conclusions about what the problems of greatest priority are, what organization, or organizations, would be practical and helpful in reaching solutions, and what immediate steps might be recommended in this connection.

Under our political system, no minister can hope to have professional experience in all the activities falling within his responsibility. In this sense, my colleagues of the Resources Ministers Council and I are amateurs - I hope that we are all sympathetic and informed amateurs, but amateurs nevertheless. The reason that our system works is that ministers can draw on the professional advice and extensive experience of their permanent staffs. In parks questions - which inevitably involve both provincial and federal governments - you are the professionals. I am sure that I speak also for my provincial colleagues when I say that we will place very great store by your advice.

Requiescat in pace

